



COLlective action Models for Energy Transition and Social Innovation

Beta release of supporting web platform for CAI development

This document serves as a complement to Deliverable D7.2 'Supporting platform for CAIs'.

It is connected to WP7 'Building a Supporting Platform for CAIs, Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation', Task T7.1 'Building a Supporting Platform for CAIs' (Months: M3-M36).

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Contributors: Maja Vrcon, Thomas Henfrey, André Vizinho, Juan del Rio, Nara Petrovic, Mario Yanez, Markus Molz (ECOLISE)

Internal reviewers: Alessandro Sciullo, Osman Arrobbio, Winston Gilcrease (UNITO); Martina Panzolato (ECN)



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Abbreviations and acronyms

CAI:	Collective Action Initiative
CfF:	Communities for Future
DoA:	Description of Action
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
WP:	Work Package

Contribution history

Date	Comment
05/05/2020	First draft version
07/05/2020	Internal review I
08/05/2020	Final version submitted

The COMETS Consortium

Partner number	Short name	Partner full name	Country
1	UNITO	Università degli Studi di Torino (Coordinator)	Italy
2	TECNALIA	Fundación Tecnalia Research and Innovation	Spain
3	HVL	Western Norway University	Norway
4	UB	Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi	Italy
5	JRC	Joint Research Center – European Commission	Belgium
6	DTU	Danmarks Tekniske Universitet	Denmark
7	VITO	Vlaamse Instelling Voor Technologish Onderzoek	Belgium
8	ECOLISE	European Network For Community-Led Initiatives On Climate Change And Sustainability	Belgium
9	TREA	Mittetulundusuhing Tartu Regiooni Energiaagentuur	Estonia
10	RUG	Rijksuniversiteit Groningen	Netherlands
11	ECN	European Crowdfunding Network	Belgium
12	UJ	Uniwersytet Jagiellonski	Poland

The COMETS Supporting Platform

The COMETS Supporting Platform for CAIs supports delivery, dissemination and implementation of COMETS findings. At the same time it seeks to provide an important resource for collaboration and knowledge co-creation among CAIs in energy and other fields of sustainability. In order to continue to deliver these functions beyond the lifetime of COMETS, it is closely linked with Communities for Future, a flagship programme to connect and support CAIs active on sustainability and climate change coordinated by COMETS partner ECOLISE. This provides a unique opportunity to magnify the impacts and value of COMETS, both within the project's lifetime and in the longer term.

The first version of the CAI Supporting Platform went live on April 30th 2020 at knowledgebase.communitiesforfuture.org. It is a beta release intended for ongoing development, including specification of key functions and tools by members of the COMETS consortium and CAIs working on energy (and other themes). Its 'final' release is scheduled for the end of October 2020. Its main target audience is CAIs - particularly, but not exclusively, those working on energy transition - with complementary target groups including municipalities, regional or national energy agencies, regulatory bodies, European networks, investors/funders and individual experts like researchers or consultants.

The platform is based on Wordpress, a widely-used and well-supported open source web development tool that is familiar to programmers and provides an extensive range of plug-ins and potential features, thanks to the size of its existing user and developer communities. The Qwangi theme was chosen due to the high quality of user experience it provides, its wide range of features and its affordability.

We built the platform in line with the aims specified in the Description of Action (DoA). It provides functionality that directly supports COMETS research and dissemination of its outputs and results (see key functions below). Its design also anticipates legacy functions for the platform's long-term curation following completion of the project.

Site Functions

The COMETS proposal listed three key functions to be delivered by the platform:

- Networking and mutual learning
- Knowledge co-creation
- Information on and access to funding opportunities (crowdfunding)

The current version is set up to accommodate these functions, accessed through the main menu bar along the top of the window (Figure 1). Their full implementation will take place during the testing phase, from now until Month 18 (October 2020). The platform is also designed in order to

accommodate any new functions emerging during the testing and co-design process, as also specified in the proposal.



Figure 1: Key site functions (with knowledge co-creation functions selected)

Networking and mutual learning functions are accessed through the Community Tab, and include:

- Groups for peer learning and mentoring
- Discussion forums
- Event listing

Knowledge co-creation functions are accessed through the Knowledge Base tab:

- A wiki on which users can create and link their own pages reviewing topics of interest
- A shared document library (in the open source application Zotero)
- A collection of articles, organised by topic, initially emphasising COMETS activities and outputs and later extending to other activities and topics
- Mapping functionality, through which users can embed maps generated with a range of third party applications, from the custom open source Gogocarto through to common commercial applications like Google maps

Information on funding opportunities will be accessed via the 'Resources' tab. This content will be added by COMETS partner European Crowdfunding Network (ECN) during the coming pilot phase. It will provide tools and resources about the crowdfunding industry and activities. Ideally, it might also collect best-practice and examples of alternative finance linked to energy, renewable sources and other topics particularly interesting for the COMETS community.

Specific COMETS research functions include:

- Integrating quantitative information gathered during the inventory (WP2), via the various means for creating user-generated content on the platform (blog posts, wiki articles, maps)
- Supporting delivery of the survey (WP3): the survey will be embedded in the platform and available until July 31st. The other way round, a link to register for the platform will be provided when concluding the survey itself. The idea is to create an intertwined incentive to respond to the survey, through association with the platform, while at the same time promoting the latter

- Communicating and validating survey findings (WP3): by means of articles and linked discussions in the forum
- Reporting case studies (WP4), via articles and wiki pages about them. Any prior documentation of case studies will also be gathered in the document library

The platform will also accommodate outputs of WP5 and WP6. These and all other project outputs will be housed in the shared document library and referenced through articles, wiki pages and forum discussions as appropriate.

CAIs participating in COMETS national case studies, along with other interested CAIs and groups of secondary users (e.g. municipalities, energy agencies, regulatory bodies, networks, investors, funders, researchers, consultants), will be able to register accounts, use platform features and develop platform content according to their own interests and needs. This will be closely monitored during the beta testing phase, and largely self-organised thereafter. Ongoing maintenance, support and moderation beyond the beta testing phase will be provided by ECOLISE within their wider Communities for Future programme, the platform's long-term home after the phase of active development and following completion of COMETS in May 2022.

Site Structure

Site navigation is via six main headings in a menu bar across the top of the screen: ***Home, About, Knowledge Base, Community, Resources, Contact***. At this moment, much of the actual content within these sections is either at a preliminary stage or yet to be developed. The site will be fully populated during the beta testing phase, as described in the following section. This section describes the current state of content under each heading.

Home

The home page gives a basic description of the site and, below this, a series of panes linking to key functions. The final layout will be determined based on site users' needs and suggestions, gathered during the testing phase.

About

The about page describes the platform and its relationship with COMETS, and includes an overview of the COMETS project.

Knowledge Base

This drop-down menu links to four separate pages: Wiki, Library, Articles and Maps.

The 'Wiki' page includes two features:

- The built-in site wiki, navigable via a search engine. This allows users to co-create wiki pages quickly and easily, in order to advance and build on discussions beginning in the forums or elsewhere and so enrich the existing knowledge base
- An Iframe that embeds the Communities for Future (Cff) wiki, a wider knowledge base curated by ECOLISE and partners on a separate MediaWiki install. Content initially developed on the inbuilt wiki can later migrate into this container for permanent integration into the Cff knowledge base

The ‘Library’ page uses the ‘Zotpress’ plug-in to embed a shared document library on the open source bibliographic tool Zotero. It displays several panes with content in specific categories (energy, climate change, sustainable development goals and economics), along with one displaying the wider ‘Communities for Future library’ of which this is a part. The option exists to create a dedicated COMETS library consisting of material assembled by the consortium and/or developed within the project. During the beta testing phase, the Consortium will decide whether it makes more sense to maintain a separate set of materials and resources or simply keep them in the wider library.

The ‘Articles’ page provides access to articles written by registered site users, organised thematically according to category. These articles can embed multiple forms of content, including different file formats and materials also hosted on other websites (such as the Cff wiki). They are thus a versatile tool for accommodating a wide range of information without needing to host it directly within the platform itself.

The ‘Maps’ page collects all maps generated by site users, which might include geolocated representations of COMETS data or maps generated or contributed by participating CAIs and CAI networks.

Community

This drop-down menu links to two of the core community-building functions: groups (which can be on any topic) and discussion forums associated with these groups. Site users can generate new groups and discussion topics according to their interests. Content will be developed during the beta testing phase, deriving from activities undertaken by COMETS partners, CAIs participating in national case studies, and any other early users.

Resources

This drop-down menu will link to three pages:

- A list of funding sources (to be developed during the beta testing phase)
- A list of contributing organisations (initially, the COMETS project and COMETS partner organisations)
- A set of guidelines for site users

This feature is currently deactivated pending creation of this content.

Site Development and Legacy

As stated in the COMETS DoA, this is a beta release for the platform, which will be tested by initial user groups and refined over the next six months (Months 13-18 of COMETS, until the end of October 2020). During the beta phase, the site will be developed and further content created by four main user groups and through three parallel processes, all described below.

The main test user groups will be:

- Members of the COMETS consortium
- Research teams and CAIs participating in COMETS national studies
- CAIs affiliated with ECOLISE and partner networks (working on energy and other fields in sustainability transitions)
- Selected test users from other stakeholder groups (researchers, NGOs, policy-makers, municipal officials, etc.)

The three beta testing processes will be:

- Directed use through COMETS national case studies, and feedback and support requests arising from these, including translation into the respective national languages
- Action learning through use of platform and feedback to the development team: users will experiment with using the site for their own purposes and provide feedback on their user experiences, particularly about any difficulties they face and any features they would like to be made available
- Facilitated processes using templates from the Platform Design Toolkit (<https://platformdesigntoolkit.com/toolkit/>), led by ECOLISE and with users from all four of the above groups invited to participate

The COMETS website will link to the platform as a whole, and to specific features, including both thematically relevant content (articles, groups, forums, library etc. on energy/energy transition, CAIs on energy) and material directly generated through COMETS (case studies, deliverables, reports, publications) that is also housed on the platform.

As mentioned in the DoA, the platform will be set up for legacy use beyond the lifetime of the COMETS project through its integration into ECOLISE's wider platform (the new *Communities for Future (CfF)* programme) supporting networking, collaboration, mutual learning and policy engagement of CAIs in energy and other fields. In order to capitalise on the long-term opportunity to amplify and add impact and longevity to COMETS work, this has been designed from the start through use of the URL *knowledgebase.communitiesforfuture.org*, which is co-branded with both COMETS and Communities for Future. This will add value to COMETS to the greatest extent possible by providing significant visibility to the project as well as continuous engagement with a variety of

stakeholders. Specifically, the platform extends its reach and impact both among CAIs in the energy field (directly or indirectly engaged with the project) and a broader range of community groups in related environmental fields, including other interested stakeholders interested in the wider CfF programme. ECOLISE will work with the entire COMETS consortium, and other networks and organisations engaged in CfF, to maximise the mutual benefits of this close collaboration.